

Stretching the boundaries of reason

Never in our wildest dreams could we have imagined that the community would be in a spat over stretching and breathing. But in today's hypersensitive society, we shouldn't be that surprised.

Saying that, we find the argument against yoga in the Aspen School District to be — pardon the pun — quite a stretch of the imagination.

Some parents of children enrolled in the school district have threatened to pull their kids out of school if yoga lessons are offered. That's because, some argue, yoga is steeped in religious and/or spiritual teachings. They also argue that it would breach the separation of church and state.

We disagree.
The yoga program proposed for Aspen's school system is about integrating mind, body and breathing — not religion or spirituality, as yoga opponents fear.

And the practice is known to have beneficial effects, such as reducing stress for people of all ages.

The yoga program proposed for Aspen's school system is about integrating mind, body and breathing — not religion or spirituality, as yoga opponents fear.

Furthermore, no child would be forced to participate in the yoga class. If a parent is locked in conviction that his or her child should not take yoga, they can simply ask that the child not be enrolled in the class.

We also subscribe to the admittedly sarcastic thought of one man who suggested that if yoga is not allowed, then athletics should be banned because the first athletic competition was “done to please the gods on Mount Olympus.”

In that same vein, students should attend school

on Christmas, and banks should be open on Sundays.

Some of the religious leaders opposed to the yoga program believe that “God” belongs in the Pledge of Allegiance, which students recite every day. That is the students' choice, too, just like yoga classes would be and sex-education classes already are.

The chief purpose of school is to educate. But we also feel that through schooling, students should be afforded the opportunity to expand their awareness of different ideas and activities, be it alternative breathing and stretching exercises (that would be yoga), painting classes or running track.

To eliminate yoga because of the fear that it somehow will suggest religion or spirituality is to deprive students of a new opportunity.

So our suggestion to the school board is a simple one: Allow the yoga classes for one year. And if a single student is seen chanting or preaching Eastern religion as a result of the classes, drop the program entirely.